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The Unique Function

OF THE

Boston Home and School Association

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The Unique Function of the Boston Home and School Association.

Of all the organizations designed to assist the development of the youth of our city, the Boston Home and School Association holds a unique place. Combining, as it does, the active efforts of some twenty Parents' Associations, composed of teachers and parents of the school districts; the thorough endorsement of the School Committee and superintendents; and the generous support of a number of public spirited citizens: it presents, indeed, a rare opportunity for real service to the child. We are always hearing the statement, "If we could only get at the parents." The Home and School Association has got at the parents, and is working with them through the several committees.

Lines of Effort.

The most important activities are carried on through the Comittee on Children's Reading, which emphasizes the responsibility of the parent in developing the habit of good reading; that on Books and Pamphlets, which directs parents themselves in obtaining the diverse kinds of knowledge needed in the proper rearing of children; the Anti-Cigarette Committee, which calls attention to the far-reaching evil of this youthful vice; that on Home and School Gardens, which aims to develop an interest in the aesthetic, scientific, and utilitarian value of garden work; the Theatre Committee, which calls the parents' attention to the excessive amount of theatre going among their children, and the bad influence which many of these amusements have on the child; that on Hygiene, which offers assistance in the whole realm of the child's physical needs, such as playgrounds, school lunches, home sanitation; on Home and

School Visiting, which employs a visitor upon whom the teachers of the district call when they need the support of the home in special cases; on School Decoration, which recognizes the cultivating influence of beautiful surroundings; on the Further Use of School Buildings, which hopes to develop, around the parents' associations, a social centre in each school district of Boston, and thereby unite the citizens on common ground for the common good. The work of these committees is not scattered, but is confined to organized groups of well-inclined, interested parents. These committees were not selected at random, but in the light of testimony from keen-sighted parents and teachers, as to the avenues of greatest need in the training of children.

Possibilities.

The possibilities of further work in the directions designated by the committees are great. It is certain that if the parents and teachers of every school district could be organized, and the work of the committees could be carried on according to these plans, we should find a remarkable improvement in our school population. This is the testimony of those who are acquainted with the work of the Parents' Associations.

Importance of the Home in Regulating the Lives of Children.

The avenue of approach is through the parent, since the home is recognized as the radiating centre of good or evil. If every home could assume the just guardianship of its children, there would be no need of organizations, designed to help the child through the home. At the present time, however, the home must receive material outside assistance, owing to lack of knowledge, lack of training, and in many cases indifference on the part of parents. Nor will the necessity for effective training of parents ever cease, if the home is to fulfil its function. As in other professions of life, there will always be the need of

scientific preparation and subsequent growth in wisdom and inspiration. That the home should come to its own, should be the earnest desire of every person who is working for the good of the child. Some people are inclined to think that the regeneration of the home is a vague ideal, and, therefore, society must look to the school, or the church, or the social settlement to assume the responsibilities neglected by parents. It is on this plea that the gratuitous feeding of school children is urged. Except in cases of real poverty, to feed the child is a step in the wrong direction. We should teach the mother how to do it. Our ideal must point to the full functioned home and we should bend our energies to accomplish this ideal. No institution, however good, can usurp the responsibilities of the home, without detriment to the child and the home.

Every Home Should be Reached.

Entrances to the home are now made by outside agencies in the way of compulsory quarantine in case of contagious disease, Associated Charity work, medical inspection, and nurses. These steps are necessary, not only for the protection of the child, but for the protection of the community. Such assistance, however, is given only when something is the matter; therefore, relatively few homes are reached in these ways. Every home should be reached, for every home needs help and guidance and inspiration.

The Parents' Association the Best Method of Reaching the Home.

The most effective method of helping parents is for parents to help themselves, and the most successful way of getting this result lies in the organization of groups of parents who desire to become more efficient trainers of children. The Parents' Association connected with the school has proved to be a natural and easy way of making this entrance to the home. Parents like

to go to the school, because their children are there; the meetings in the school house, therefore, afford a splendid opportunity for the presentation of the many interesting subjects represented by the activities of the Home and School committees. The Association maintains a Lecture Bureau and furnishes competent speakers for these meetings. The intermingling alone of parent with parent, and parent with teacher at these meetings, makes richer lives and happier homes.

The Parents' Association the Best Means of Interesting the Uninterested Parent.

The Parents' Association establishes an *esprit de corps*, becomes a centre of sympathy and consideration for the unfortunate home, and, through its visiting committee and the social hour after the meeting, gets hold of the indifferent and neglectful parent. Parents know how to reach other parents, and in time it is possible to reach all but the most helpless. The great majority will inevitably come under the uplifting influence of these intelligent and sympathetic groups of earnest seekers after knowledge. The record of this kind of help is one of the most encouraging results of the Parents' Association. A universal system of Parents' Associations means a universal regeneration of the home.

Mutual Assistance of Parent and Teacher.

If the Parents' Associations performed no further function than to create that friendly desire on the part of both parents and teachers to assist each in their respective efforts, they would occupy a large and important place in the development of the child. This understanding between parents and teachers brings home to the former a more acute sense of their own responsibility in the school life of their children, and, on the other hand, teachers find real assistance in getting near the parents and learning their point of view. This is one of the very

first results of these meetings, and certainly it is a most natural result, for mutual acquaintance begets confidence.

Co-operation with Other Organizations.

The Parents' Associations have also proved to be most effective agencies for spreading the ideas of other organizations, designed to help the child and the home. Lecturers from the Association for the Relief and Control of Tuberculosis, for instance, have been welcomed to the meetings, while the Vocation Bureau can obtain valuable assistance by taking advantage of these organized groups of interested parents for the presentation of its plans. In fact, it would seem that effective work of the Vocation Bureau is almost dependent upon co-operation with Parents' Associations, for the Vocation Bureau must not only advise boys and girls as to their future occupations, but also convince parents as to the value of such counsel.

The Parent as a Civic Factor.

As a civic body, the Parents' Association is fundamentally important. A parent is not the best kind of a parent unless he is a good citizen, and the best way to make him a good citizen is to awaken his interest in the community. Here, again, the natural centre of his neighborhood activity is the school. The Boston Home and School Association hopes to see in a few years not only a Parents' Association in every school district, but every school district with its social centre, "where education can be given a broader scope and definition; where the lost art of neighborliness can be retaught; music and the drama brought to the people; ethical problems of the family and state debated; local patriotism stimulated; class antagonisms and misunderstandings of a composite population lessened through contacts that produce mutual knowledge and respect."

The Parents' Association Developed into a Social Centre.

The group of men and women, gathered together for the best interests of the child, is precisely the organization to foster community interests, and, therefore, develop into a social and intellectual centre in the full meaning of the term. After all, Parents' Associations and social centres should be synonymous expressions.

Public Meetings.

The Boston Home and School Association has still another aim in view. Through its public meetings, it is able to disseminate general information concerning the school system as a whole; and it can, at the same time, emphasize most impressively some obviously unwholesome condition affecting the development of children. Our great mass meeting in Tremont Temple last spring, which had for its general subject, "Keep the Children off the Street," is an instance of the value of such meetings. Then again, the assembling of groups of people from the various sections of the city establishes a common interest in the city as a whole; and just, as in the community centre, class antagonisms and misunderstandings are lessened through contacts, so in this central assemblage of people sectional distinctions and narrow local prejudices sink into the background, as attention is focussed on needs common to the whole city.

The Value of the Home and School Association.

An organization which aims to create higher standards in the home, to assist the school through increased interest and responsibility of parents, to develop a sincere community life, and to unify all these endeavors for the general good of the child, performs a great service, not only for the child of to-day and to-morrow, but for the adult population which has the city's welfare in its keeping. The functions of the Boston Home and School Association are inclusive and vital.

Officers for 1909--10.

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Press.

EDWARD H. CLEMENT, Boston *Transcript.*

Books and Pamphlets.

MRS. A. LINCOLN FILENE, 270 Commonwealth Ave.

Anti-Cigarette.

MRS. ELIZABETH R. WHITE,
Secretary, Massachusetts Anti-Cigarette League, 204 Equitable Building.

Home and School Gardens.

HENRY SAXTON ADAMS, Wellesley, Mass.

Children's Reading.

MISS ALICE M. JORDAN,
Children's Librarian, Boston Public Library.

Theatre.

EDWARD H. CHANDLER,
Secretary, Twentieth Century Club, 3 Joy Street.

Further Use of School Buildings.

JAMES P. MUNROE,
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Membership.

OTTO FLEISCHNER,
Assistant Librarian, Boston Public Library.

Hygiene.

Mrs. Ellen H. Richards,
Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

School Decoration.

James H. Mahoney, South Boston High School.

Home and School Visiting.

Mrs. Richard C. Cabot, 190 Marlborough Street.

OBJECT

of the

Boston Home and School Association.

To improve conditions of child life in Boston — by fostering co-operation between the home and school, and by providing an opportunity for the study of child development, — intellectual, moral, and physical; also by working constructively for the moral and physical improvement of the school district.

MEMBERS — FOUR CLASSES:

Life — Twenty-five dollars or more at any one time.
Sustaining — Five or ten dollars annually.
General — One dollar annually.
Branch — Members of parents' associations.

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